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1836

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Jennings, Ebenezer.

Address delivered at
Plainfield (Mass.) July 4, 1836.

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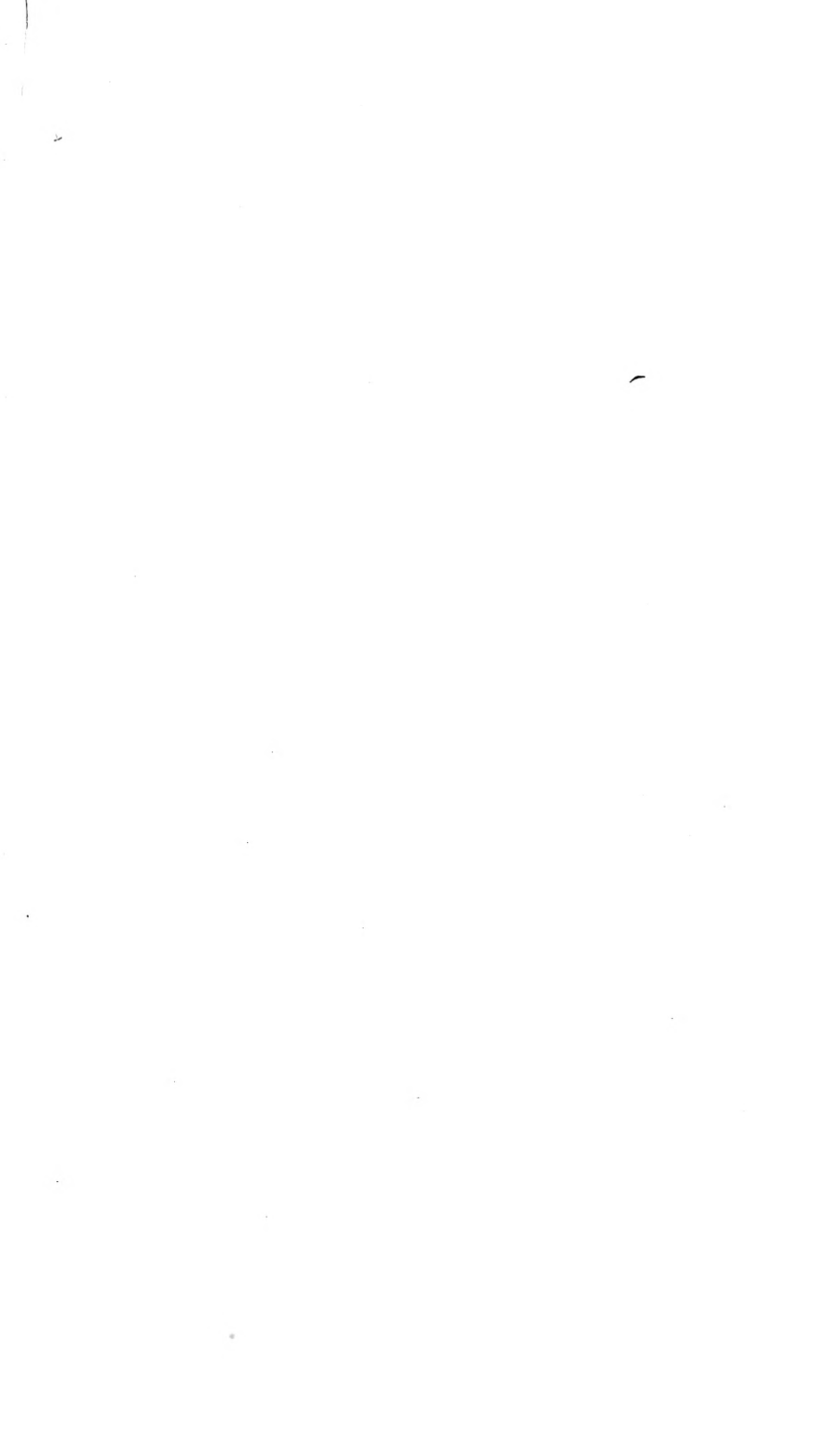




Class E286

Book P69

1836



ADDRESS

OF

REV. EBENEZER JENNINGS,

DELIVERED AT PLAINFIELD, (MASS.)

July 4, 1836.

BEING THE SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY

OF

American Independence.



3 NORTHAMPTON.

John Metcalf....Printer.

1836.

E. J. 226

After the following address was delivered ; it was resolved " that the thanks of the assembly be presented to the Rev. Mr. Jennings, for his *able*, *patriotic*, and *impartial* address, and that a copy be requested for the press."

Col. Josiah Shaw, Elijah Clark, Esq. and Col. Jason Richards, were appointed a Committee to carry the same into effect.

ADDRESS.

MY Fellow Citizens, of the great Republic, I address you as such, on this interesting day.

Should time and circumstances ever efface from the minds of distant *coming* generations, the recollections of this day, which gave birth to our nation, *we* certainly live too near it, to let it pass unobserved. While as yet, there are some standing here, who have “jeopardied their lives in the high places of the field,” to gain our Independence ; we, as their sons and daughters, will not forget the day,—and for myself, there is one circumstance you will permit me to mention. I was a child, by *birth*, of '76. Nearly the same week of the declaration of Independence, I began to be rocked in the cradle of parental affection—at that moment, the cradle of American Liberty. And I can never forget the circumstance ; when the proclamation of “Peace” was issued, my father used to call in his little son, when the neighbors came in to *greet* him, and make him read that instrument before them ; gladdening his heart, that he had lived to see the day, when his children should *quietly* breathe the air of freedom. And, as if inwrought into my imagination by the circumstances of birth, the “clangor of arms” infested my dreams. And at the age of 15, with quick and joyful steps, I made my way from the “land of steady habits,” my native State, to place my feet on Bunker Hill ; and there, from some thirty hills, the forts and redoubts “still keeping their place the same,” enchanted the

eye of youthful astonishment ; and nought on *earth* has ever yet filled the imagination with the same fullness of admiration and glory.—Ah ! and while those wasting mementos of the *fearful* flight of our enemies, are leveled to the plow, the proud Monument of Bunker Hill, rearing by the patriotism of the sons of freedom, shall tell through successive generations, the triumphant story of all the movements, under God, to the final victory, that “ crowned the day.”

And now, when our “ political bark ” was thus launched, on the tempestuous and *uncertain* sea of liberty ; it would be but natural, that I should have kept my eye on her sails, her rigging and her movements ; though my spy-glass was but a *little* one. And I see—I see, for a long sixty years, she “ outrides the storm.” She has steered clear of the “ rocks and the shoals ; ” and although adverse winds have whistled through her rigging, and sometimes made a rent in her sails ; she yet rides in triumph in sight of the nations of the earth—and is it too much to say, a “ spectacle to *angels* and to men.”—Yes, she had her Washington at the helm, as wise, and as great, and as honest, in the Cabinet as in the Field ; around whom, the hearts of the people were gathered, interposing the breast-plate of their love, to the few shafts of *envy* and *jealousy*, but *now* and *then*, shot from *polluted* hands. Peace—to his ashes, till the “ great resurrection.” Enthroned in the hearts of every American, let him live, till the world shall end,—the hero, the statesman, and the *honest* man, who always *quietly* waited for God, and his Country’s call. Yes, and we had our Adams too—yes, and let us be candid, we had our Jefferson too ; whom, to say no more, death made friends in *one* day. The anxieties, the heavings and sighings of the soul, beginning at the same moment ; kindling, burning and glowing together for their country’s glory,—and when the sun of its glory shone so brightly, in beholding

its brightness ; as if the ravishing prospect overpowered the feeble tenement of the soul, they expire together on the same, *fiftieth anniversary* day, of their country's glory ; as if, in the purpose of God, to make *one other* showing, of his "setting his seal," to the reign of liberty.

I can only glance at a few occurrences. We pass on.—A wide and extended country—territory enough—(a Louisiana purchase just for convenience,) the Federal compact established—governmental and *state rights* secured—a "wheel in the middle of a wheel"—an empire within an empire—the "federal government," in sound *Websterian* construction of it, like "Aaron's serpent, swallows up the rest." A nation now of *freemen*,—the children of a rich, proud, but *hard* and oppressing parent ;—not having "spent their substance in riotous living"—"keen for the fight," as well as for the axe ; hardy, industrious, persevering ;—thrown into an attitude to exert all their power and skill for national existence ; flushed with victory, and put on the highest point of their energies, as a *nation*. And let it be noted, that without *such existence*, no nation ever yet came up to the *full measure* of their energies. And now, in the calm sunshine of *peace*, what might we not expect ? Aye, anticipation has been more than realized. The waving forests have been cleared away, and we have built our "towns and cities there." The cattle graze upon the pastures ; and the sheep bleat on a "thousand hills." Our country, rife in its own productions, wafts its surplus produce, at pleasure, on every sea, by its own canvas, and the price thereof, like the inclined beam in the balance, trembles and shifts, till it finds its equilibrium. Our Schools, Academies, and Colleges, tell to us, and others, that our science does not consist solely in handling the axe, or following the plow. In manufactures and the mechanic arts, no man will say we have been slow of *intellect*. The resources of our country, and the

interchange of our commodities with, let me say, all nations of the earth, tell upon our *treasury*, the astounding fact, that the immense debt of two wars has been fully discharged. Our canals and our railroads, and may I not say, *our* proud passage by steam, only indicate *now*, what *can be*.

But I must stop.—Ah! there is something, as Downing would say, which “trigs the wheels.”—Ah! yes, there is—there is! That *slavery*—slavery, that *inherited* curse; once graced over by the sanction of Zion’s friends, and now, with us “*compact*ed by that which every joint supplieth, maketh increase, to the edification of the body,” in *hate*. Ah! who shall tell us what shall be done? Ye sages in Church and State, commingling your counsels at the altar of God; tell us, what shall be done! Impenetrable darkness, as yet, broods over this subject. I can only dart a thought across it.

Talk on, ye Abolitionists. Shed forth your light, only “take heed to your spirits;” and be afraid, that your *immediate* remedy, be not worse than the disease. Talk on kindly. The slave-holder will begin to think (if he sees in you the charities of the gospel) on the melioration of the condition of his slave. He will give permission, and even aid in giving him the “light of the life to come.” And the *poor* slave will begin to feel the full force, *without force*, of the benign Apostle’s saying, “if thou may’st be *free*, use it *rather*.” And in God’s own time, when the door of the master’s heart shall be unlocked by the power of the gospel; and with a clear view of the *same* benevolence toward the *providential condition* of his slave, he will say, in the fullness of his heart, “*Be thou free*.” And ye Colonizationists, talk on—act *efficiently*, for *you* can do it. Bear away on your *charities*, to “Afric’s soil,” him that is *free*, and him that is willing. Return the “*stolen goods*,” *uninjured*. Or, in other phrase; take back, O degraded Africa, the soil we surreptitiously at-

tempted to settle upon—take it back, “without money and without price,” and *thank* us for the “*betterments*.” I add again, carry him back to the land of his inheritance, now a *freeman*—a *freeman*—a name he never knew before,—carry him back, redeemed at *home*—redeemed *here* ; and he will thank you forever, for his *double* redemption, and his *double* trans-atlantic voyage. There, on his native soil, and in his *new republic*, open to him the fountains of civilization, and christianity ; and there, let his light radiate till his more wretched brethren “feel the heavenly shine.” And what remain in this land of liberty, let us for them, watch the “pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night,” and not *rashly* move forward without the *token*.

I pass for a moment to the poor Indian. I can only say a word—I pity his case. It is wretched now—it always has been. The philanthropy of the Civilian and Statesman, the prayers and labors of an Eliot, a Brainard, and a Sergeant, have left him still in a wretched condition. We shall all perceive, that it has been tried, in long experiment, that commingling with the white population, and for the purpose of civilizing and christianizing them, has all been in *vain*. New-England, with all her virtues and her benevolence toward them, could not retain them amid her population. At their own will, they have retired ; and the voice of the good and pious has pronounced it *right*. And often has this voice kindly urged on them, the terms of a fair and just purchase. It does seem that God and nature, have said in language too plain to be misunderstood, they cannot dwell among us, either for their *own* good, or for ours. I am decidedly of opinion (though some may perhaps differ from me) that the policy of the general government to remove them for the present, at least, to the “far West,” was the dictate of the soundest wisdom, sanctioned by the experience and example of two hundred years ; and in the approv-

ing voice of the pious and the good, in church and state. To carry out this policy toward the remaining tribes in the States was a difficult task. The government was crowded up by, I suppose, the *selfish* inroads of the Georgians on the Indian territory within their State. They waited for more than twenty-five years, for the government to extinguish the title of the Indians to that territory; which the government had stipulated to do, when it could be "peaceably done." The Georgians *mal-treated* the Indians, and *they* resorted to the government for the "stipulated" protection. The government, and perhaps *wisely*, forebore to employ force, and made the Indians an offer of exchange of lands. If the offer, with the appendages, was not *fair* and *generous*, it *should* have been. To *compel* the Indians to sell, or exchange, never entered into the mind of the government. I have ever believed the government, all things being as they were, took the wisest course. And whatever the Georgians have done as oppressive, and they have no doubt, done a *great deal*, though not "sinners, probably, above all other men;" and whatever the governmental agents have guilefully and wickedly done, in carrying into effect the *entire* purposes of the government, I most sadly deplore; and I hope the sin, and *judgment* of it, will be averted by the *deepest repentance*. And now, let the Indian retire—pay him generously, and let him retire, probably for his *own* good, to the still "farther West." There, unsurrounded for the present, and let me say, *unembarrassed* by a white population; let him follow the chase, his *native* delight, or till the soil. And you may follow him with your prayers, and your missionaries, till divine providence shall yet *further* tell, whether he is to be civilized and christianized, or—his race become *extinct*.

Ah! my fellow citizens, we might under a kind providence, surmount these evils, if all other things were "equal." But, I must turn over another page still more

blurred, and try to read it. Here we are presented, on the title page, I will not say, with a *total*, but a fearful destitution of *moral principle*, of *honesty*, and *uprightness*. Ah! me, the "spirit of the times!" I love to hear the phrase when applied to the *enterprise* of our age; but when applied to the *moral principle*, to the *honesty* and *uprightness* of our age, it palls on my moral sensibilities, and I could wish, I *now* heard it no more. The love of *popularity*, amid our *free* institutions, the ambition, the love of distinction, the "looking of every man to his gain," the general scramble for office and "place;" in their onward and rapid march, seem to bid defiance to the efforts of truth and righteousness; as if "truth had fallen in our streets and equity could not enter." The sectional jealousies, the differing interests, the prejudice and *selfishness* of party feelings, "eat as doth a canker;" and are wasting away our *vital* energics. Thousands seem ready, at any moment, to launch their bark on any sea, and hoist their sail to the popular breeze, that *will* bear them onward, as if it were of little consequence, which way they were driven, or on what territory they were landed. The voice of soberness and truth sounds feebly on the ear.—The political jugglers for "fame and place," easily take advantage of any story, somewhere and somehow conjured up, and many an Editor, (at least for a little of the "ready") would be willing to spread it before the people, and nought can enter that guarantied, and yet responsible deposite of the principles and feelings of the people; that would, for its offence against *popularity*, take off even *one* subscriber. Now the *same selfish* fearfulness to loss and to popularity, seems to pervade every class in community, from the chair of state, down to the very "chimney sweep;" as if the whole community were moved by one common impulse, individually to inquire, as the only concern in life; what will be for *my interest*? Or, in words of holy writ, "who will show us any good?"

And the question, what is *right*, is the last question to be asked with a *full voice*. Yes, the whole community seem, too manifestly, to be acting on the broad and damning principle of *supreme selfishness*. This is the *gist* and *secret* of our iniquities.—And in this *frank* and *honest* hour, I should be sorry to lie under the suspicion of ogling to some statute, in by-gone days, and in *other lands*, to take advantage of it, for the “benefit of Clergy,” or the church. I hope it will not be deemed unfair or unkind, to say that the church of God, partaking, as she will, more or less, of this “spirit of the times,” embosoms much of the same unholy principle. It cannot be denied that many within her pale, are too strongly disposed to bend and sway to *interest*, and to fawn, and crouch to *popular favor*.—From the waters of the “Sound” to the last religious figurer of the empire State,—and for what? ah, too *fearfully*, for what?—Was it to *beguile* the people into the belief of a *new-ism*, whether it in *reality*, existed or not? and the end was answered? Or, *certainly*, it was in effect, to create a *new line* of jealousies, and sunder the bonds of fraternal feeling. “Tell it not in Gath,” save this *once*. And, if borne on by *mere* popular feeling, I will say with Pope;—“Pursue the triumph, and partake the gale.”—If we turn now, and cast the *kindest* eye on that great, and *absorbing forum* of ecclesiastical discussion in our nation, we should be forced to conclude, it is not *now*, the *fittest* place, to learn the meekness, the gentleness and the purity of that religion, which *must* preserve, and save our country; and, if we look at the late *showing there*, of the desecration of the *Sabbath*, we shall too fearfully see, in Zion’s friends, the employment of *capital*, to say nothing more, to administer, in effect, to the corruption of morals; as if *selfishness* had put her “*veto*” on every other consideration. I will draw aside the veil no further in my department; and now only say, I am sorry!!

Ah ! this same selfishness, (with too few honorable exceptions) as I have already said, pervades every class in community, as if every one was “ looking to his own way, and to his *gain* from his quarter ;” and *truth* and *righteousness* were left to take care of themselves ;—and in unchecked progress, what are we not to expect ? And now, fellow citizens, is it any wonder, in such a state of common feeling, if there is an *under* current of *infidelity*, and even in “ high places,” which would burst forth, whenever it could become *popular* ? Is it any wonder if the Sabbath becomes desecrated—if error in a thousand forms, in state and church, should stalk through the land ?—If Owenism and Mormonism, and I dare not name the rest, of the *half and quarter blood* relation, should spread their influence, as it shall be fanned by the *popular* breeze ? Is it any wonder, if any political man will chaffer for office and place, if he can be borne on by any story of deceit or guile ? Is it any wonder, that the aspirant for office, will shift his opinion into accordance with the feelings and views of those who will help him on ? Is it any wonder, if your Senators and Representatives, in state or nation, are not the same to day they were some four or six years ago ; or will it be strange if they are not *next year* what they now are, or *next month*, or even *tomorrow* ? As if, my hearers, the body of electors and voters were giving their divided tone, creating and consecrating the divided public feeling ; and they that “ would be great,” standing and looking on, to take the *benefit* of it.

But I am compelled to cast an eye forward, to see these conflicting interests—these jealousies, party feelings, aspirations for office, founded in the selfishness of the human heart, and so uncognizant of the public good ; heaving, striving, “ agonizing,” to a focal point.—Who shall be our President ? And, gentlemen, I have no party ends to answer. Let us make “ straight paths for our

feet.”—And who do you want to preside over you? I’ll tell you. A man who will satisfy all parties, who will *bow* to every interest, however selfish; who watching the motions of every party, will *not* assent to the *strongest*. A man who in the language of Lord Byron, will “*sway, and sooth, and sue,—and be a living lie;*” or in the emphatic language of common parlance—a man who would not dare to say, “his soul’s his own.” Yes, fellow citizens, you are “the *people—the people;*” and I love to have it so,—the people who rule and make your President. But I beseech you to let him have a *soul* as well as you—have an *opinion* as well as you—be a *man* as well as you. If he is to answer every party, to be swayed by every selfish or ambitious purpose, to be drawn away by every petty interest, to succumb to please the selfish wish of every man; from my *heart*, I pity him. And I will wait for the selfish and *unprincipled* feelings of the people, who would wish his virtues were not made of “sterner stuff.” And has it come to this; that if Washington, with all his honesty, integrity and uprightness, should he come on earth again, could not by your suffrages, take the chair of State? In the present state of feeling, you would not advance him there. He would be too *honest*, and too inflexible of honest purpose, for the “spirit of the times.” And dare I say, I should be afraid to put a *christian* there, to be the man your selfish feelings would wish him to be? He would pollute his holy profession, if he met your wishes. And I should pity the *sect* to which he belonged. I would rather venture, in the language of Pope; “To give humility a coach and six.”

Gentlemen, I am speaking for no *party* purpose. President Jackson was not the man of my choice. But I am not quite sure, he was not the very man you *needed*. Not because he was a Washington; but because he was found to have a *soul*, a *purpose*, a *resolution*, and I sup-

pose, a *constitutional, unbending will*, that fitted him for the *peculiar* period of his administration. And his friends quailed under it, because he was their man. And, let it be, as it has been told on the floor of Congress, that he has thrown around him the *selfish homage*, that borders on *idolatry*; still you will remember, what has now been said, this only shows, the *corrupted* state of a majority of the “body politic.” And, his opposers, I’ll do them *justice* too, cannot *fairly* plead exemption from the same pollution. And I am crowded to say, for *truth* runs in “*straight lines* ;” you may *change* the *line* of succession, (as you know the people are trying to do in Massachusetts) but while the great polluted fountain remains the *same* ; it will be only *pouring some of the same water into another cup*. And I will admit, there may be a momentary and contingent gain. But I will leave it to the political and moral chemist, to say *how much*. I will now take my leave of our President. He will soon retire from his office. And I will venture to predict, that if this unsubdued, selfish, ambitious, corrupted and corrupting feeling, of the “body politic,” meets *no check* ; that the *name* of some future President, in twice four years, or as many more, will not be worthy, to be enrolled on the *same* page with that of Andrew Jackson.

You will not impute to me an electioneering purpose, for I have none, and I will speak once more. Who shall be your next President ? If I have rightly depicted your wishes, and the state of things, it will follow of course ; he will be the man, whoever he be, who has never been *guilty* of telling *too much truth* ; and who has it legibly inscribed, on his *political* “Phylactery,” that he will never think, or act, or speak, as a *public man*, till he has cautiously considered, the *selfish* will of *every* State, of *every* party, and of every junto—of every society, of *young* men and *old* men, and *maidens* too ; and thus bows submissively—*your humble servant*.—And when your congrega-

ted and consolidated feelings, shall *fully* have designated the man to your liking; I assure you, I will do him *reverence*, as being as *patriotic*, as *good*, and as *honest*, as "the times will admit." And, in mythologic language, we may "thank our stars," that the fates were so *kind*, as to afford us one so good. And I will only regret for my country, to say the *least*, that the spirit of Washington could not diffuse its influence from the chair of State; and to say the *most*, that the spirit of king David could not shed its light on our American Israel.

I will now trespass on your patience, but a few moments longer.

It must be solemnly borne on our mind, that the grand secret of our *safety* as a nation, lies in the *honesty* and *virtue* of the people. But, this floating on the popular current, as if that current were made by some *magic spell*, in an *unseen* world—this truckling to our *every* interest—this "looking, every man on the things of his own, and not on the things of others"—this "skulking" behind our own *selfishness*, and petty interests, in both church and state, when *truth* and *righteousness*, and the *general good* are overlooked, I am awfully afraid, will yet prove but the sure passport to the ruin of our country!! If any should think I have darkened the picture too much, he may reflect, that I have said nothing about our *profanity*, our *awful* desecration of the Sabbath, the unsightly *relics* of our intemperance—of the *unnameable* pollution of our cities, of *southern* cruelties, of our mobs, our murders, and our Lynch laws. I have been looking *nearer home*,—into the *heart* of the great community—into that *fountain* from which all the polluted streams flow forth.

And now, in *special* and *direct* view, to what has been said in this address, have we any *redeeming* qualities? I answer, *yes*. We have our *Bible*: and we have our Academies, our Colleges, and our Theological Institu-

tions ; all of which have been baptized for *sound* literature and science, and biblical exposition,—and they have not lost as yet, their *baptismal rite*. With these helps, and the enlarged intelligence that results from them, the public mind is *susceptible* of being swayed. And I now humbly call on my Clerical brethren, upon the Civilian, the Statesman, the Poet, the Orator, and the Editor, who have been baptized, as in the fountains of our literature and piety ; to come out *boldly*, as *honest men* ; and *say nothing*, and *write nothing*, and *publish nothing*, which is inconsistent with “*sound speech that cannot be denied* ;”—and *honestly*, and without *fear* of consequences, *mould and guide* that *mass* of mind, that can yet, under God, be swayed by your influence ;—and *strive together*, to bring that mass of mind, now so rapidly increasing, by an *influx* of “incestuous” and polluted additions—to bring it under that *holy and benevolent* influence, which that great *Charter* of our heavenly rights, has so graciously and righteously *demande*d, for our present and eternal felicity. And let every *christian*, who is so “*in deed* and in *truth*,” awake from *his* slumbers. And let every American citizen, solemnly bear it on his mind, that he should be more afraid of the sins, we have specified in the body of this address, than of the *curse* of slavery, the tomahawk and the scalping-knife of the Indian, or the hostile inroad of the *mightiest* nation on the globe. And let him remember too, that for these sins Israel of old was carried away to Babylon. And for these sins, which *preyed* on the *heart*, Jerusalem, the city of the “Great King,” and once the peculiar residence of God, is now *left* of her *God* and her *Saviour* ; “to be trodden down of the Gentiles !!”

I must now address a few words to those venerable Fathers of the revolution, who sit before me.

You have borne for us, the “burden and heat of the day;” and we of this generation, will gratefully remember you. And although *coming* generations shall tread over your graves, and not know who sleeps *beneath* their feet; the page of history shall faithfully record your *fears*, your *toils*, your sufferings, your valor and your victories. And when you look at the pittance you receive from year to year, whether you are *rich* or *poor*, consider it as a *token* of the remembrance of your country, when you stood *fearless*, at the cannon’s mouth, to gain that liberty, which you, and your children and your country have enjoyed, even *so long*. And had you, in military style, died on the “field of glory,” we should readily have said, in the words of a Poet, you died not “the death of cowards, or of *common men*.” But you have escaped the deadly wounds of the battle,—and in the peaceful shades of your now comfortable retirement, from the din of battles, and the bustle of the world; may you enjoy, in the evening of your protracted life, that “*peace* which the world cannot give or take away.” And when the last hour shall come, and you shall have commended your immortal spirits to the *mercy* of that God, who can make you “*free men*” in Christ; let this one petition, quiver on your dying lips:—“God save the Commonwealth,”—God save the Nation.

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The following persons were *present*, as borne on the Pension list:—

Rev. Moses Hallock, Dea. James Richards, John Hamlin, Esq. Jacob Nash, Phillip Packard, Samuel Streeter, Josiah Shaw, Ebenezer Dickinson, Whitcomb Pratt, Caleb White, Joseph Barnard.

Samuel Thayer, Caleb Packard, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Butler; from other towns.

Four others in Plainfield, *absent*.



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